

Mrs. George Myers is my second cousin; my mother and her mother were full cousins, only her mother was a half breed, mine was full blood Indian. Get it clear. Lena Myers was originally Miss Lena Plant, daughter of Peter and Addie Plant, then Lena married Harry Page, and then Capt. George Myers.

"GASSY JACK"  
JOHN DEIGHTON  
WHA-HALIA

"Gassy Jack's" Indian wife is living at the North Vancouver Indian Reserve; in the village. I don't know what her English name is, (Madelienne,) but her Indian name is "Wha-halia". I have not seen her, but my cousin, Christine Jack tells me Wha-halia says she had a son by Gassy Jack. She must be very old. She wants me to go over and see her as she says she remembers me when I was a little girl, and father lived at one end of the Gastown beach and Gassy Jack at the other.

COLLINS, THOMAS

"TOM COLLINS"? He married an Indian woman. He had a sort of ranch in the bay at Plumper's Pass; on the Mayne Island side; on Mayne Island. My father was anchored there in our sloop, the "Morning Star", and I was about five years old. Collins had an Indian wife and some boys and girls; one of the children was Lizzie, and the boy was Tommy, but I have forgotten the other children's names. Collins was a great big tall man; wore size twelve shoes. He was an Englishman. I think there were two children besides Tommy and Lizzie; one was Melville.

SLOOP "MORNING STAR"

Major Matthews: "How do you remember so well?"

Mrs. Walker: "I've got a good memory (Note: She cannot read nor write) and there was not much to remember those days, and we were there for two or three days. I was born on July 4th, what year I don't know, but, officially for Old Age Pensions, I am supposed to be going on 71, so that the time we saw the Collins ranch must have been, what did you say it was, 1874? (probably 1872) And, too, that was when we lived at Brockton Point, long before we went to Reid Island (Note: Joseph Silvey pre-empted on Reid Island in Sept. 1881) and then, after we went to Reid Island we heard about them. Mrs. Collins, Indian woman, told my stepmother Lucy Silvey, that she was a Sumas woman. I think Mr. Collins was 'something'; Justice of the Peace or something. She was a nice looking Indian woman; tall lady."

Memo of conversation with Mrs. James Walker, 721 Cambie Street, who has just returned from a three weeks visit to her daughter in Seattle, and kindly called at the City Archives.

27th May 1940.

JOHN DEIGHTON  
"GASSY JACK"  
INDIAN WIVES OF WHITEMEN  
QWA-HALIA or MADELINE

Mrs. Walker said: "I went over to the North Vancouver Indian Reserve, and found Gassy Jack's wife, Wha-halia; she

remembered me when I was a little girl. Her English name is Madeline. Madeline told me Gassy Jack was her husband, that Gassy Jack had, first, her aunt for a wife; then her aunt died, and he took Madeline, her niece, as wife. Gassy Jack and Madeline had a son, but the son died shortly after Gassy Jack died.

"Madeline must be old, about ninety I should think; her hair is snow white, she knew my father, Joe Silvey, "Portugese Joe", and she knew me when I was little. She said her husband, Gassy Jack, was, at first, a captain at New Westminster on a stern wheeler boat going up to Yale, and then he built the saloon over here in Granville, and he had another little house in the bushes behind the hotel for her; that was his home when he was not in the hotel, but he was always, all the time, ill, and then he sent for his brother and his wife to come from the Old Country.

Major Matthews: "Did the old Indian woman Qwa-halia tell you all this?"

Mrs. Walker: "Yes. (then significantly) She should know; Gassy Jack was her husband. I remember her when I was about five years old; gee; she was a pretty lady. She told me there was money left to her and her son, but she never got it. When his brother and his wife came they took charge of everything, and she went back to her people. "Then," she said, "Gassy Jack died, and her son died about a year afterwards." She told me that Gassy Jack left a will for her to get money, but she never got it, and they buried him in New Westminster. She got married afterwards to a Musqueam Indian, but he is dead now.

Memo of conversation with Mrs. Madeline Williams, aged Indian woman, also known as "Gassy Jack's wife", living with her granddaughter, Nita Williams, in a small cottage at the west end of the Indian Reserve, North Vancouver.

13th June 1940.

Entering the Indian Reserve by the long wooden path, on stilts, which rambles, over the former shore line, before the front of the Indian village of Ustlawn, I encountered an old Indian man with one arm, and asked if he knew where Madeline lived; he shook his head. Finally I said "Very old lady, with white head, Qwa-hail-yah." He exclaimed, interrogatively, "Gassy Jack's wife?" I replied, "Yes, yes", and he directed me to a small grey shack deep in cherry trees loaded with ripening fruit.

As I approached, an Indian man and Indian woman, both I should say, in their twenties, were raising a ladder to pick cherries, and on enquiring if I could speak to Madeline, the young woman entered the rear door of a sadly dilapidated and untidy shack, hardly a cottage. She returned with an aged Indian woman, steel grey hair, light brown complexion, many wrinkles, and tottering gait. Her garments were old, the color almost completely faded. Her hair was braided in two short tails down her back. I raised my hat, and took a wrinkled hand in mine.

MRS. MADELINE WILLIAMS  
QWA-HAIL-YAH  
JOHN DEIGHTON  
"GASSY JACK"

countenance gleaming) "Yea--ah"

and sit down?"

Major Matthews: "Are you Madeline? Are you Qwa-hail-yah? Mrs. Williams- (giving my left arm just below the shoulder a gentle slap, and her eyes and

Major Matthews: "May I come in

We sat down; four of us. The whole habitation was a litter of household material not one piece of which was of value; a number of rags hung on a line above a rusty stove; beside it a few sticks of wood. Two doors, opening to other "rooms", showed their contents to be nothing more than rubbish, though no doubt each piece was useful and serviceable to them. Outside the sun was shining; a profusion of red cherries mingled with the green of the leaves; the warm summer zephyr waved the branches; it was pleasant enough to the senses, but terribly poor, untidy, pleasant poverty. At an appropriate moment I slipped a fifty cent piece into her wrinkled hand.

It was difficult to converse as Mrs. Williams spoke in Indian, and addressed the others, rather than me, who interpreted it, and both were poor interpreters, but I gathered



that the whitemans called her Madeline, but her Indian name was Qwa-hail-yah. She had had a son, Alfonse Williams, and the young woman was Nita, daughter of Alfonse and Mrs. Williams; the young man was Tommy Toman; (whom I was afterwards told was married, but his wife had left him and gone to the United States). Yes, Gassy Jack and she had had a baby; it lived about two years, died, and was buried at Paapeek (Brockton Point). She remembered the first brass band on Burrard Inlet; the Indian band; the first bandmaster was Edwards, a half breed. She had always worn her hair braided down her back; she had heard of Indian men having long hair, but, ever since she could remember, Indian men had worn it short. She was about twelve years old when she married Gassy Jack; Gassy Jack's first wife had died; she remembered when no big steamboat come; no whites here; only one house. She talked much in Indian, but the young Indian woman, Nita, her granddaughter, was speechless, and almost motionless; the young Indian man Tommy, was very slow, and a poor interpreter. No doubt the old lady was telling much of interest, but the young ones were listening themselves instead of passing it on to me. Presently I said I should like to buy some cherries; "two bits" worth, and they both went out to pick them. After they had gone, the old lady began to speak in broken English; I noticed she was almost toothless, and such teeth as did remain were brown of color, and looked like snags rather than teeth.

She chatted: "No steamboat come; no white mans; just one house; Gassy Jack came in big canoe--"and she waved her arm indicating from the direction of Port Moody up the Inlet--"then Gassy Jack go Westminster to run steamboat up to Port Yale; (she said "Port Yale") and my aunt she go over to New Westminster, and live there so when he come back to Westminster be there when he stopped his steamboat. Gassy Jack about your size, (five feet eight and half); nice good man; then he come Gastown; make great big hotel (and she waved her hand upwards); after a while she sick, my aunt, Gassy Jack's wife, and she die; long time ago; I not stop long Gastown; be about twelve when I was Gassy Jack's wife; then Gassy Jack die, too, and I come over to here (North Vancouver); then come to my brother and my sister. Very poor now; no money, no clothes; cannot go to sell my baskets; can make good basket, but cannot go sell them; eyes getting blind."

By this time the two others had returned with the cherries. I tried my glasses on her eyes, but she did not seem to see any better. I asked if they had a photograph of her; they said "yes, up at Squamish". I asked if they would like another; they said "Yes". I asked if I may come again; they said "Yes", and after handshakes all round, I departed.

It was a satisfactory visit only in that I had seen and conversed with the second wife of Gassy Jack; an old, worn and faded Indian woman of undoubted intelligence and character; gracious and kind, who in earlier years must have been of womanly strength, and, perhaps, prepossessing--I imagine so. It was an unusual visit inasmuch as in this year A.D. 1940, it was still possible to listen to the tongue, and touch the person, of a wife of John Deighton, "alias" "Gassy Jack", of Gastown, the historic white man to establish himself in Granville, now Vancouver.

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16th August, 1948.

"GASSY JACK'S WIDOW, MRS. MADELINE WILLIAMS"

'QWA-HAIL-YAH' or 'QWA-HAY-LIA'

Died, North Vancouver, 10 Aug. 1948"

The daily newspapers, "Province" and "Sun", Aug. 11th, and "Sun", Aug. 12th, announce her death in large type followed by biography of her life, or what purports to be a biography.

The accounts state she was "over 100" years old, and "may have been 110".

The Indian Department give her age as 90. (Official age).

See "EARLY VANCOUVER", Vol. 5, page 387 and 401.

Also "CONVERSATIONS WITH KHAHTSAHLANO", Matthews, 1955.

Capt. John Deighton, alias "Gassy Jack", died June 9th, 1875. The date of the death of his wife is not known to us but, after her death, he "married" her niece, Madeline, or Qwa-hay-lia, just deceased. They had a little baby boy who lived about two years. Capt. Deighton owned the "Deighton Hotel"—not the Sunnyside, as stated in the press—but, in addition, had a little cabin back in the forest, somewhere about what is now the corner of Carrall and Hastings street, where Qwa-hay-lia presided, and to which he retreated for peace and quietness. The account states Madeline, up to the time of her death, was "making baskets for a living". The fact is Madeline was almost blind. I found out the state of her eyesight by trying my own glasses on her. He did not bring her to Burrard Inlet in his canoe—it was her aunt who came. In 1940 she told me she was about 82, and this is confirmed by the official age given me today, August 16th, 1948, by the Indian Agent.

"J. S. Matthews"

CITY ARCHIVIST

Book: Gastown's Gassy Jack,

author: Raymond Hull

What a triumph for Jack to give food, offer money and say, like a prince, "I might send for you!"

In August the BC & VI Mill was again reorganized as the Hastings Sawmill Company, and on the 16th started work. Cash and liquor flowed again in Gastown.

**Husband and Father.** Not long after he moved to the new hotel, Jack's wife fell sick. Before she died, she arranged for Jack to marry her niece, Qu-a-hal-ya, or Madeline. Madeline was 12 years old, Jack was 40. The marriage was celebrated, again "in the manner of the country" and consummated. Before the end of the year, Madeline was pregnant.

During 1871, she gave birth to a boy who was named, after his late uncle, Richard Mason. Madeline and the baby did not stay at the new Deighton Hotel; she did not like the noise and drinking; she felt out of place with all the white men, so much older than herself. She lived in a little cabin back in the forest, near what is now the corner of Carrall & Hastings.

(In her old age, she described Jack as "a nice, good man." Major Matthews, after interviewing her, said she was "of undoubted intelligence and character; gracious and kind.")

On June 14, '71 Jack, having paid the balance of the purchase price, received final grant of his lot from the Crown.

**Growing Pains.** On July 20, 1871, the Colony of British Columbia became a Province of the Dominion of Canada. But the people of Gastown were less concerned with national politics than with law and order at the Inlet.

Trouble was almost inevitable. The population of Gastown was an explosive mixture of different races, nationalities and religions. There were Indians, Kanakas, Chinese and whites; there were Catholics, Protestants, Confucianists and pagans; there were Americans, Canadians and Europeans of various nationalities, nursing ancestral prejudices and sore over current grievances. (Once, for example, Gassy Jack took a shotgun and drove off two men engaged in removing a stump along a trail that led to a competing saloon.) Then, as if the Gastown residents had not enough troubles of their own, there were the frequent arrivals of ships' crews, kicking up their heels after long voyages, and loggers on weekend sprees—hard-drinking, hard-living men, handy with their fists and boots.

Gastown was certainly no sink of iniquity with round-the-clock orgies; yet there was an increasing number of robberies, fights and stabbings. Raymur, Moody and Gassy Jack petitioned the Governor for better police protection.

In the fall of '71, Jonathan Miller was appointed police constable. Miller, an Ontario man, a former New Westminster city councillor and logging contractor, also served at Gastown as customs collector, government agent, clerk of the court and jailer. He earned \$50 a month and lived in a government-owned cottage next to the Deighton Hotel. This cottage was called the Court House. Behind it stood the jail—two log cells with-out locks on the doors.

Other residents were now buying their lots, determined to stay and grow with Gastown.

In December '71, in public meeting, 75 residents of Hastings Mill and Gastown agreed to start a private school. Early in '72 the company built a frame schoolhouse between the stumps on the mill clearing. Later in '72 this became Granville School, under the B.C. Free Public School Act.

Also in '72, the Granville Post Office was opened in the Hastings Mill store. To make a mailbox, a pane of glass was taken out of the store window and a movable board hung over the hole; patrons pushed away the board and put in their letters. Some people waited at the store to meet the mail arriving from New Westminster; mail not handed out then was sorted into a rack of lettered cigar-boxes.

Among its wide range of merchandise the store carried patent medicines such as Percuna and Pain's Celery Compound, popular hangover remedies that contained 75% alcohol!

In '72, Louis Gold opened a store on the shore-side of Water Street, in a little building rented from Gassy Jack, with a two-plank sidewalk in front of it.

Joseph Mannion and Billy Jones bought Ebenezer Brown's saloon. Gastown got its own butcher shop, owned by George Black.

On April 24, '72 Gassy Jack, always the patriot, hoisted over his hotel the first Dominion flag ever flown on the Burrard Peninsula.



Hastings Mill as seen from Gastown in 1872.

Photo: Provincial Archives, Victoria, B.C.